

## Konica Photo Memories

Konica is a common motif in my work. I remember Konica film because my parents used to use it, and a lot of our prints from the late eighties and early nineties family albums were on Konica 100 life paper.

I also remember this famous 1990 commercial with this song, Konica Colours are Calling Me. It seemed to sum up a world in which walls were coming down, and globalisation and multiculturalism was the only way forward. And in fact, that commercial made me want to be a photographer it tapped into something inside me, but I later found out that it was actually filmed at the grave of the colonialist Cecil Rhodes in, Zimbabwe. This seems such a fitting metaphor for the end of the 20th Century. A corporate face of wholesome optimism hiding something darker beneath it.

I really feel like we're still living in the wake of the 20th Century, actually - its hopes and dreams, its cracks and failures. Konica has been defunct now since 2007, but, some of the old Konica labs still have this logo, this kind of really optimistic logo like this one that I found in Gillingham. And in fact, the owners of photo memories gave me loads of Konica stuff that I now have in my, in my studio.

The Konica table, though, was built by my sister, the artist, Chantel Pitts, and is partly inspired by James Baldwin, who allegedly I met when I was a baby, 'cause my father was in Starlight Express. And he was an understudy for an actor called Lon Satton. And Lon Satton was good friends with James Baldwin. So, like just before he died, he used to come and see Starlight Express and, so he was always around, in Europe during that time. James Baldwin's last novel was called The Welcome Table and was about some of the amazing people who came to stay at his house in the south of France over the years. It actually features fragments of wood

found in the ruins of James Baldwin's house in Saint-Paul de Vence. And I want it as a place for people to just come and sit and reflect on notions of, of home and community.

On the table, you can see three photo albums; one representing the past, one representing the present, and another representing the future. The brown album, which is the past, is titled More Blacks, More Dogs, More Irish, playing around with those famous racist signs that people had up in BNBs and pubs in Britain in the like fifties, sixties, and, I think even seventies. I realised that my household was literally made up of all those things that were sometimes rejected in public spaces; was a place where Black people and Irish people and dogs were actually welcome because that's what my family is made up of.

The album is a mixture of photographs from the family archive and new photographs I took in my mum's house where I spent most of 2020 in lockdown. This house, which my mum has had for 40 years is probably the closest thing I could call a home. A place that is a home, but really it's the people and the objects that make it home, not the bricks and mortar. The red album represents the present and is from a series of Kodachrome slides I found in Marseille which is where I was living until the pandemic hit.

Marseille is my favourite city in the world and in lots of ways reminds me of Sheffield with its mix of working class white, Black and Arab communities. It's a post-industrial city too, with similar topographical features. And because I'm using Graves Gallery to conjure up the notion of a dream home, I decided to use these images that I found in Marseille a kind of vision board.

Marseille is really where I see myself and my family living now. The blue

album is representative of the future, but what I would describe as a kind of retro future and features photographs from Japan during the late 1980s bubble era when I lived there with my family briefly. I think the images suggest something bittersweet. It's Japan in a period when it was just a complete time of decadence and when I was there as a child, it was just all about consumerism. To put it simply, we lived in five-star hotels and bought loads of things and it made us happy to be honest. The department stores were like utopias of leisure and consumption, but this was during that era that Francis Fukuyama came up with his end of history idea and overconfidence in western liberal democracy after the fall of communism.

And I remember that at the time, no one really felt ashamed by this consumption in Japan. It seemed as though in the future everyone would have flying cars. I saw a working prototype of one, by the way, which you can see in this album. And everyone would have money and lots of leisure time. And I think that people thought that was gonna happen in Sheffield.

When we returned from Japan, there was a shiny new shopping mall called Meadow Hall, built on the grounds of an old steel factory. And, and being from Sheffield, a city that actually was being decimated by Margaret Thatcher and free market capitalism, Japan in the eighties was at the top of the food chain and, almost seemed to offer like an exciting insight into what the world might look like 20 years into the future.

And of course, it didn't really work out like that. So, so I'm mixing actual photographs from my family's eighties Japan archive with contemporary work shot on the same cameras in an attempt to problematise my own nostalgia for that period.

And I use old Konica film for the new work. And because even the last rolls of Konica film expired in 2009, those Konica colours are now really weird

and sort of glitchy. And, and this especially holds true for the film that I like to use in, in various ISOs, which is Konica SRG or the Japanese version Konica GX2, which mostly expired in the early nineties and often have has a weird kind of purple colour wash due to the specific way Konica's emulsion layer structure degrades.

I'm usually like against promoting logos, but I feel comfortable using the Konica rainbow in my work because of its status as a defunct corporation. You can't see my work and then buy into the brand because it no longer exists - at least as a manufacturer of photographic products. But the brand was so optimistic and so indicative of the eighties and nineties. And you can feel the optimism when you look at their products, but they feel haunted somehow because you know that the brand and much of the late 20th Century optimism that hits encoded with failed. And with the film, this is magnified.